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WASHINGTON STATUE IN WASHINGTON PARK, NEWARK, N. J.
Erected to commemorate Washington's Retreat through Newark

THE BATTLES IN THE JERSEYS

AND
THE SIGNIFICANCE OF EACH

BY

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ONE characteristic of the American Revolution is that the question at issue touched the bedrock of human rights as affected by civil government.

It was not a war for trade, or for annexation, or for race dominance; it was for inalienable rights belonging to all peoples, in all lands, throughout all times.

Our Revolution stands pre-eminent also in the magnitude and permanency of its results both here and abroad. It established a world-power here; abroad it was a strong factor in the French Revolution, it reacted favorably on the government of Great Britain, and it involved the separation of South America from European control.

And what is more, the influences started in 1776 are still at work; they have brought blessings on the human race in the past, they will bring even greater blessings in the future.

The war opened with splendid outbursts at Lexington and Bunker Hill; but both sides entrenched at Boston and the result was a long deadlock ending in a compromise, the British being allowed to sail away to Halifax unmolested provided they left the city of Boston unharmed.

It is the way of the Anglo-Saxon to get into a war first and then make his preparation afterwards. From April, 1775, to the following August, both parties were mustering their resources and planning military and financial

measures on a large scale. These were months of earnest preparation, but as the hour for decisive conflict drew near, the superiority of our foes was very evident in men, ships, arms, ammunition, and other military supplies. It was King George's aim and hope to stamp out the rebellion in the fall of 1776.

The opposing commanders were William Howe and George Washington. They had faced each other at Boston; they were now to face each other in New York and New Jersey. Howe had 31,000 men, and Washington had 27,000; New York City and Philadelphia were the prizes fought for.

The campaign opened with the landing of Howe on Staten Island in July, 1776, and closed with the arrival of Washington at Morristown in the following January; the military movements and battles during that interval, approximately five months, should always be viewed as one campaign, as a single series of operations. The surprise at Trenton was not an isolated exploit, neither was the dash on Princeton, and never should they be so treated; they were the master strokes of victory at the end of a long succession of heartbreaking defeats.

What a list of disastrous events for the American cause was crowded into the interval from August 27th to December 25th, a period of one hundred and twenty days! The leader of the Americans was becoming known as a man of defeats and retreats. Oh, the danger of it, the danger of it, that the psychology of a new-born nation in the agony of its despair might demand a change of leaders.

THE CONTEST IN NEW YORK

Washington had 8,000 men at Brooklyn. Howe, having transferred 20,000 troops to Long Island, turned the American left flank and inflicted a loss of 2,000 men. Lord Stirling of New Jersey was one of the American officers who won laurels on that ill-starred field. The Continental army was withdrawn secretly to the lower end of Manhattan, under cover of darkness and a morning's fog.

Again Howe turned the American left by landing at Kipp's Bay, throwing Washington's veterans into panic and flight and causing a retreat to Harlem Heights. Repeating the same strategy, Howe threatened to turn the American left by extending his lines northward along the Bronx river, his aim being to entrap the Americans on Manhattan island. This movement forced Washington to make a rapid retreat to White Plains. Here again Howe struck the left wing of the Americans and drove it from Chatterton Hill at the point of the bayonet. Returning to Manhattan, Howe dealt the American cause another staggering blow by capturing Fort Washington.

THE RETREAT THROUGH THE JERSEYS

Washington crossed the Hudson at Peekskill with 5,000 men and hurried to Hackensack. Howe, having secured New York City, struck at once for Philadelphia by throwing 6,000 men across the Hudson near Yonkers. Then began the famous retreat across the Jerseys. "These are the times that tried men's souls." Washington abandoned Fort Lee, reached Newark on November 23rd, passed through Elizabethtown on the 28th and reached New Brunswick on the 29th, with 4,334 men, of whom over 1,000 were sick. Lord Stirling, whose division of 1,200 men formed the American rearguard, left Princeton December 7th and crossed from Trenton to the west bank of the Delaware on December 8, 1776. Headquarters were established at Newtown, Pa.

The retreat through the Jerseys was not a flight; the movement was deliberate and orderly. The various retreats on Manhattan and in its vicinity were punctuated by five or six battles; but the retreat across New Jersey from Jersey City to Trenton was attended by no battles. Why was this? New Jersey, it is true, has no mountains lying across this path and therefore no strong line of forts could be built to resist the invaders; but rivers present excellent lines of defense and New Jersey had two good rivers for that purpose, the Passaic and the Raritan. Why did not Washington make a stand at each of these? Why did he let slip such good opportunities? He might, at least, have interposed long delays and exacted heavy tolls.

Washington had 5,000 troops. He had ordered Charles Lee to bring 4,000 Continentals from Peekskill and join him at once. Lee deliberately loitered on his way and kept his whereabouts concealed, paying not the slightest attention to Washington's repeated commands. He was prompted by an unholy ambition to supplant Washington as commander-in-chief. No stand could be made at the Jersey rivers because the two sections of the American army were not united; Washington was in front of the British, that is, on the west; and Lee was on their right flank, that is, on the north.

It was tragedy then but it makes one smile now to think how it all ended, how this schemer slept one night at a tavern outside his own lines and was taken prisoner the next morning by a troop of light dragoons and hurried away half-dressed to the British headquarters at New Brunswick. John Sullivan, who was next in command, made a swift march to Phillipsburg and joined Washington with Lee's troops at Newtown.

Charles Lee was utterly without principle. Let it be clearly understood concerning this man that there was not an hour during any day or night after he put on the Continental uniform when he was not a potential traitor, when he would not have sold out to the British for gold.

THE BATTLE OF TRENTON

Washington showed skill and forethought in his arrangements to prevent the British from gaining a foothold in Pennsylvania; he divided the western bank of the river into sections and placed an officer with a detachment of troops in charge of each section; he collected all the river craft and kept them under careful guard concealed in the mouths of creeks and behind islands. Those boats and those detachments, originally intended for defense, were the very best means possible for coming back to New Jersey when Washington seized the initiative. He had the boats to come in, and the various regiments were already stationed at the proper crossing-places.

The British troops had been placed in winter quarters at widely separated points; Grant was at New Brunswick, Rall at Trenton, and Donop at Bordentown; moreover these officers seem to have assumed that the war was over and hence became very careless. Washington was quick to perceive and grasp the opportunity.

It must not be forgotten that Washington's plan was a large one; he expected to have his officers attack Lawrenceville and Black Horse and Bordentown on the very same morning that he surprised Rall at Trenton. Cadwallader crossed the river, but was compelled to return by the violence of the storm; Ewing failed even to cross.

It was shrewd to let the stroke fall on the Hessians at a moment when their enjoyment of Christmas night had unfitted them for fighting. The crossing was made at McConkey's ferry, nine



WASHINGTON CROSSING THE DELAWARE

miles above Trenton. The work of transportation was slow and difficult, and it was four o'clock in the morning when Washington took up his march for Trenton with 2,400 men. The right was led by Stark and St. Clair; the left was led by Washington himself, and with him were Greene, Mercer, James Monroe and Lord Stirling.

A storm of sleet beat upon them and wet their muskets. "Tell your General," said Washington to Sullivan's messenger, "to use the bayonet and penetrate into the town. The town must be taken. I am resolved to take it." Both columns struck the enemy's pickets at eight o'clock; entering the town from opposite directions, the Americans had their foemen between two fires. Rall was mortally wounded. Anspach's regiment was driven into an orchard, where they threw down their arms.

Knyphausen's regiment endeavored to make a stand on the other side of the orchard, but when Lord Stirling led his brigade against them, they indicated their desire to surrender by hoisting their hats on their bayonets, and Lieutenant-Colonel Francis Scheffer, then senior officer, surrendered his sword to Lord Stirling.

And now, what were the results of the battle of Trenton?

It is the merest commonplace to say that it was the turn of the tide. Hope sprang up in hearts that long had ached with the anguish of despair.

The picturesque features of the movement have become ingrained in the world's imagination; we see the quiet preparation, the crisp frost, the crowded boats, the high wind, the swift current, the floating ice, the exhausted boatmen, the ill-clad

soldiers with their faces bent to the storm, and the silent night march. We see the sentinels driven in, the Continentals advancing at quick step through the empty streets, the confusion of the bewildered Hessians and the fall of their ill-starred commander.

The value of this victory was not limited to the capture of a thousand Hessian prisoners and to the shattering of the popular superstition of their supposed invincibility. This victory wrought a marvelous effect on the heart of every patriot throughout the entire country.

And after all is said, the greatest significance of the surprise at Trenton I count to be this, that it saved George Washington to the Continental army and to the American people. The most decisive event in Washington's public career was his crossing of the Delaware. It convinced the American people that he was the right man.



MONUMENT OF CANNON BALLS
COLLECTED AND ERECTED ON BATTLEFIELD OF PRINCETON



THE BATTLE OF ASSANPINK

On December 29th, 1776, Washington crossed from the Pennsylvania shore to Trenton with a portion of his troops. Having ordered others to cross at points lower on the river, he soon collected his whole army together and on January 2nd laid out an entrenched camp on the south bank of Assanpink creek, facing north, with his left touching the Delaware. He had 5,000 men; the banks of the stream were steep and wooded; and he secured the bridge and fords with earthworks and artillery. He learned that Cornwallis had concentrated the British divisions at Princeton and was then approaching Trenton determined to crush the audacious rebels who had dared to re-enter the Jerseys.

Washington was anxious to avoid a fight that day, so he posted guards at three different points on the road leading from Princeton; he himself visited these outposts on a tour of inspection and placed Greene in command, with orders to delay the British as much as possible. As Greene's men retired under pressure, Washington stood at the bridge over the Assanpink, assigned them to their place within his camp and took personal charge of the defense. The situation was critical.

The British column approached the bridge at four o'clock; only a short period of daylight remained, which Cornwallis used to test the various fords, but he found his way blocked. He then made three strong assaults on the bridge, but was repulsed each time. His loss was estimated at 150 killed and wounded. Withdrawing about a mile,

he encamped for the night, the pickets of the two armies being within hailing distance of each other. Cornwallis was wise in not continuing his attack that night, but he was very foolish in not stationing strong guards on every road leading out of the American camp.

Washington was too prudent to await a pitched battle on the next day. It was impossible to cross back into Pennsylvania; moreover, such a movement would have destroyed all the moral results of his victory at Trenton. He might have retreated down the Jersey side of the Delaware, but he had in mind a far better plan. He resolved to decamp in the night and, slipping around behind Cornwallis, to threaten the British quarters at Princeton and New Brunswick.

Providence favored his plan by sending the cold to make the roads hard and firm. He ordered some of the guards to keep throwing up breastworks, he ordered others to keep the fires burning. He started his baggage train southward to Burlington.

By daylight he was approaching Princeton. This masterpiece of strategy was a fit companion to the surprise of the Hessians at Trenton.



BATTLE OF PRINCETON

From a painting in the possession of John R. Weeks, Secretary of New Jersey Society S. A. R.

THE BATTLE OF PRINCETON

Three regiments of British infantry spent the night of January 2nd at Princeton, with orders to go on to Trenton the next morning.

There were two bridges over Stony Brook, one south of Friends' Meeting-house and the other north of it at Worth's mill. The 17th foot was leaving Princeton along the upper road; the Continental army was approaching Princeton along the lower road; each crossed the brook at its own bridge at about the same moment; neither knew of the other's presence.

Washington halted his troops, reformed his lines and gave final words of advice to his officers. His thoughtfulness led him to believe that the British would soon be using the upper bridge either when pursuing him from Trenton or when escaping from him out of Princeton. There was a road, called the Quaker road, from one bridge to the other, running along the eastern bank of the stream. He could have taken his whole army up this Quaker road and then have entered Princeton by the upper road, but he decided to save time by marching straight forward to Nassau Hall, following a private road across the fields.

So he sent Hugh Mercer with about 375 men up-stream to destroy the bridge at the mill. As the regulars under Mawhood, after crossing the bridge, came to the top of Millette's hill, they saw Mercer and Mercer saw them, across the stream from each other.

Mawhood hurried back across the bridge and turned to meet Mercer, but did not keep in the

Quaker road; he crowded up into a field to gain higher ground and thus keep Mercer near the water's edge below him. But Mercer, too, sought the same high ground and reached it first. The Americans knelt at the rail fence and fired. The British returned the volley, charged with the bayonet and drove Mercer's men in headlong flight. Here fell Mercer and here fell Neil and Fleming and Haslet, while trying to rally their men.

Washington, out of sight on the lower road, heard the firing and led the Continentals to the rescue, hurrying forward William Moulder's battery, with the Pennsylvania militia to support it, and directing Hitchcock to keep off any possible aid from Princeton.

The regulars, elated by their success over Mercer and not yet seeing that they had entered the lists against the whole American army, made several magnificent charges under a withering fire. Here occurred the noted incident of Washington's riding between the two lines and receiving a volley from each at the same moment; he was reckless that day, with him it was win or die. It was now Mawhood's turn to give ground; his regulars broke and ran, some through the brook, others across the bridge; some were captured, some escaped.

This finished the first fight at the Battle of Princeton. The action had lasted about thirty minutes; it was unlooked for, spectacular, fast and hard, and very fatal to American officers. It was a swift and dramatic climax to their cold, lonely march during that winter night. Washington had



seized the initiative and was holding it triumphantly. It thrilled the Continental army then and it has thrilled the American people ever since.

The victory was assured but not yet completed. The victors must hurry forward to attack the other two regiments of foot; these had taken a strong position behind a deep ravine just south of the college. The Americans were drawn up in line on the south edge of the ravine, cannons were brought up and some companies were pushed around on the enemy's flank, but before the circle could be drawn they fled toward New Brunswick, the 55th by way of Rocky Hill and the 40th by way of Kingston.

This, the second fight at the Battle of Princeton, left Washington undisputed master of the town, but there was still a little firing to be done and a few prisoners to be taken. This third and last action was picturesque. Some of the Hessians had taken refuge in Old Nassau and barricaded the doors, but Captain James Moore obtained a cannon and soon caused them to capitulate. Here it was that a cannon ball cut King George's head out of his framed picture.

Declining to tempt fate further, Washington led his exhausted troops to Pluckemin and, after a rest, on to Morristown.

Trenton, Assanpink and Princeton form one of the most brilliant series of victories in American history.

THE BATTLE OF FORT MERCER

The Americans had built two forts to prevent the enemy's fleet from sailing up the Delaware river to Philadelphia. These forts were close together and opposite the mouth of the Schuylkill river, Mifflin being on an island and Mercer being on a reach of the Jersey shore known to sailors as Red Bank. Fort Mercer had a garrison of four hundred men under the command of Christopher Greene.

The British had reached Philadelphia by marching overland from Chesapeake bay. Their army being at Philadelphia and their fleet being in Delaware bay, it was impossible for them to allow the Americans to retain control of the stretch of river intervening.

Howe sent Colonel Donop with 1,200 Hessians to assault Fort Mercer, which they did on the morning of October 22nd, 1777, with great boldness and vigor. The Americans administered to their assailants a crushing defeat. The Hessians withdrew after suffering a loss of 400 men, Donop himself being mortally wounded. The American loss was only thirty-five. Howe subsequently captured Fort Mifflin and then sent such a heavy force against Fort Mercer that the Americans abandoned the fort and gave the British an open river to the sea.



MOLLY PITCHER AT MONMOUTH

THE BATTLE OF MONMOUTH

Every one knows how the British tried to reach Philadelphia in the fall of 1776, but were turned back at Trenton, and how they tried the next fall and were successful, going in ships to Chesapeake bay and marching overland; how they won the battle of Brandywine and occupied the city all winter while the Continentals suffered and starved at Valley Forge.

It is not so generally known why the British abandoned Philadelphia and that whole region permanently the next summer; and this they did of their own accord, without a fight; for they were not driven out by Washington. Why this radical change of policy? What is the secret of it? The cause is not evident if we keep our view fixed narrowly on Philadelphia and Valley Forge; we must look abroad, we must survey the whole theater of the war.

The fundamental fact was that the king was reaching the limit to the number of men whom he could persuade or hire to come to America and fight for him. There were two reasons why the king's cabinet in London reversed its previous policy. In the first place, France and Spain were helping America, and therefore it was necessary to strengthen the British garrisons in Halifax, Florida, the Bermudas and the West Indies. In the second place, the cabinet thought it would be much easier to subdue the southern colonies by landing a force at Charleston, S. C. This is why the king ordered Henry Clinton to evacuate Philadelphia and transfer those troops to New York City.

It was no longer Washington's problem how to capture Philadelphia ; his only problem was how to inflict the greatest damage possible on the retreating troops.

Crossing to New Jersey on June 18th, 1778, Clinton took up his march for Sandy Hook, where he was to be met by transports ; Washington left Valley Forge and started in pursuit. The two lines would intersect at Monmouth Court House, and this is why it came about that in 1778, during Sunday, June 28th, the longest day of the year, there was fought on the banks of Wenrock creek in Monmouth county the longest battle of the Revolutionary war. The marching began at five o'clock in the morning, the firing began soon after seven, and the contest closed only with the going down of the sun.

The features of the day may be summarized thus: Four insignificant skirmishes; the retreat of Monmouth, by which is meant the needless and confused falling back of the Americans for two miles (caused solely by Lee's disobedience and neglect) ; Washington's formation of a temporary line of defense along the east bank of Wenrock brook; the incident of Molly Pitcher; the hand-to-hand struggle at the hedge-row for the body of Henry Monckton; the Americans driven from their temporary line and forced back across the brook; the formation of Washington's main line of defense on the west bank; the advance of the British across the brook; the attack on the American left flank repulsed by Lord Stirling, and the attack on the American right flank repulsed by Greene.

Clinton withdrew about a mile, encamped and rested his troops and then stole away under cover of darkness.

As we watch the movements of the American troops during that memorable day, we recognize the invaluable service rendered to the Continental army by Baron Steuben while inspector-general at Valley Forge.

It has been said that the genius of Washington was of such a type as to make him a sure winner in a long campaign, that he was a trifle slow in comprehension and in the selection of the best measure out of several; but Monmouth bears ample evidence to the fact that Washington rode on a strange field where confusion reigned supreme and wrought a marvelous change without any delay and without any mistake. And this was not due to any error on the part of his opponent, for Clinton himself played the game that day like a master from early dawn to midnight.

And now, who was the victor? Opinions differ because there are different rules for judging the contest. When the struggle is for the possession of a field, he who keeps it wins; by this rule Washington won. When one fights to get away and he gets away, that one wins; by this rule Clinton won. When two parties fight against each other in order to inflict damage, he who inflicts the greater damage wins; this rule makes Monmouth a drawn battle, for the losses were practically equal.

But there is another rule and a better one, and it is the true test for Monmouth. How did the officers and soldiers who did the fighting regard

the result? The answer is unanimous; the Americans everywhere were jubilant; the moral effect on the army and on the public, at home and abroad, was strongly in favor of the Americans. In confirmation of this, history shows that Monmouth was the last great fight made in the northern states.



MINUTEMAN





SPRINGFIELD PRESBYTERIAN CHURCH SHOWING STATUE OF MINUTEMAN

THE OPERATIONS BEFORE SPRINGFIELD

The possession of Morristown, with its camp and magazines, was essential to the American cause. During June, 1780, the British made two attempts to capture it, operating from Staten Island. The villages along the way are Elizabethport, Elizabethtown, Connecticut Farms, Springfield and Vauxhall, and Chatham; the first half of the road is over level country, the last half is among hills and mountains. The real objective of the British was Morristown. Springfield is at the edge of the foothills and constituted Morristown's first line of defense. Both invasions broke down at that point; each of the British commanders, when brought face to face with his real task at Springfield, where the first serious resistance would be offered, changed his mind, turned about and marched homeward.

The first invasion was on June 6th, 1780; the other on June 23rd, seventeen days later; the opposing generals in the first were Knyphausen and Washington, in the second Clinton and Nathaniel Greene, a complete change in the personnel of the commanders.

To understand the significance of these events, it is necessary to answer three questions. What sudden hopes had sprung up in the British breast that induced them to make these attempts at this exact time? Why were two expeditions made so close together, for the same purpose and over the same ground? How came it about that different generals were in command?

THE BATTLE OF ELIZABETHTOWN

Clinton, the British chief, was in South Carolina in the spring of 1780; during his absence he had left Knyphausen in command at New York City.

Our troops at Morristown were starving, and a mutiny broke out on May 25th. Spies having carried the news immediately to New York, Knyphausen was quick to see the possibilities of the situation. He printed handbills encouraging treason and had them distributed within the American lines. He resolved to hurry toward Morristown with 5,000 men, being in high hopes that he would be welcomed by deserters and that whole companies would throw down their arms. But he reckoned without his host; there was something about the American soldier that a European mercenary never could understand.

The expedition started from Staten Island and passed through Elizabethport at daybreak. Major-General Sterling (not to be confused with New Jersey's hero, Major-General Lord Stirling) was riding at the head of the British column through Elizabethtown when a minuteman fired a shot which struck Sterling in the thigh and inflicted a mortal wound.

The militia under Elias Dayton were very active, falling back but offering a resistance of increasing vigor. Knyphausen was bitterly disappointed; he halted half a mile from Springfield and called a council of war. He saw William Maxwell's brigade ready to dispute his passage over the Rahway river, and on the hills beyond he saw



WASHINGTON'S HEADQUARTERS AT MORRISTOWN

the Continental army. This was something different from co-operating with mutineers, so he encamped and made no attempt to force the American lines. It was a dark and rainy night, made ill-omened by the boom of alarm guns and by the blaze of signal fires on the distant hills.

The British retreat began before daylight. The church and parsonage and other dwellings at Connecticut Farms were burned, and Hannah Ogden, the wife of Chaplain James Caldwell, was murdered.

Knyphausen had been alert and prudent; he was prompt to seize the possibility of aid from the mutineers, and on reaching Springfield and seeing the situation, he was wise in not pushing matters to the issue.

THE BATTLE OF SPRINGFIELD

Henry Clinton, having won brilliant victories in the south, arrived at Staten Island on June 17th. He, too, looked longingly at Morristown; he, too, cherished the hope of reaping some material advantage from the mutinous spirit that was smoldering among the American troops.

But he was craftier than Knyphausen. Perhaps it was the presence of Washington that overawed the mutineers, and perhaps the mutineers were held in check by the presence of certain loyal regiments. It would be a shrewd trick if he could in some way entice Washington with a portion of his troops away from Morristown; under such conditions Clinton hoped that a second invasion might be more successful than the first.

This is why a second invasion followed so quickly, and why the commanding officers were different.

Clinton placed his men on ships and made believe he was going to sail up the Hudson to attack West Point. Washington, in his suspense and uncertainty, thought it best to take a part of his army and occupy some station further to the north so as to be in a position to defend West Point if that post should be threatened. He left Greene in charge and on June 21st marched eleven miles toward Pompton. This was a wise move provided Greene had troops enough to protect Morristown.

Clinton immediately started his invasion, setting out from Staten Island with 5,000 men, accompanied by cavalry and artillery. His plan of attack on Springfield was excellent; the left wing

advanced by the Springfield road and the right wing by the Vauxhall road.

But Dayton's militia renewed their annoying tactics. When the troops needed wadding, Parson Caldwell gave hymn books to them, shouting, "Put Watts into them, boys!"

The first bridge on the American right was defended by Israel Angell, the second bridge by Israel Shreve; the bridge on the Vauxhall road was defended by Henry Lee and Ogden. The British, by bringing up their cannon and by flanking movements, forced their way over all the bridges. The American loss was eighty-three, the British loss one hundred and fifty.

Greene withdrew a short distance to higher ground in the rear where the two roads came close together and where he could present a narrower front; here, along the slopes of the only pass leading to Chatham and Morristown, he posted the brigades of William Maxwell and John Stark, with the militia on the flanks.

Clinton, looking in vain for any signs from the mutineers, halted his columns. He had been at Bunker Hill, and he had visited the burial trenches at Fort Mercer. He realized that his scheme had failed, and so without making an assault he marched back to Elizabethport and crossed to Staten Island on his bridge of boats.

CONCLUSION

Here we must stop; we have spoken of the Retreat through the Jerseys, of Trenton, Assanpink and Princeton, of Fort Mercer, Monmouth, Elizabethtown and Springfield; gladly would we tell of other battles, how Lord Stirling and Cornwallis fought hard near Westfield; how Colonel Baylor was surprised in Bergen county and Count Pulaski near Little Egg Harbor, and how Joshua Huddy fought at Toms River block-house; but enough has been given to show how rich this state is in fields whereon men have died for their country, fields which will be sources of patriotic inspiration through all generations.

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